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AIR POUCH

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EXR INDEX

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

COPY NO. 1 SERIES A

FROM : The American Embassy, BONN  
TO : The Department of State, WASHINGTON

Despatch No. 608

October 4, 1957

*10/12* ACTION *5/12* *RM/R* IRC S/S C S/P C IO  
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SUBJECT: GERMAN REUNIFICATION

*Em:ger:ga:jd:dh*  
*res:up:11/1/57*

Although the future course of the Federal Government cannot be predicted with certainty, the recent election results give some valuable insights into the prevailing German mentality. While reunification was much discussed during the campaign, it did not prove a decisive issue. The Government came under heavy attack from all opposition parties as being too lethargic about seeking German unity, including such aggravated charges as the SPD slogan "A Vote for Adenauer is a Vote for the Permanent Division of Germany." The size of the CDU victory proved that few voters were sufficiently moved by such allegations to desert the Government parties. In short, most Germans voted for security and stability. Even though they may not be happy about the lack of progress toward reunification, the majority at least are willing to accept the status quo as the best they can reasonably expect under present circumstances. The election was further confirmation, if we needed it, that reunification is not at present a burning question. Germans are enjoying prosperity and full employment, and the conservative preferences reflected by the electorate, including repudiation of the extremist parties, demonstrated a healthy reluctance to engage in experiments. Despite continued rather feeble cries from the SPD for a new Four-Power Conference to discuss reunification on the basis of their proposed European security system, there is no significant public demand for the Government to make new moves. Nor is there evident any willingness to make sacrifices for this purpose, although it is difficult to estimate what price most Germans would be willing to pay unless and until there appear to be more realistic chances of achieving a settlement. This public attitude has been reflected by Adenauer and his Government.

Adenauer is a Catholic Rhinelander, culturally and politically attuned to the West, pro-French, and undeviatingly anti-Communist. He is completely realistic about the power centers in the world -- the

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US and USSR --

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US and USSR -- and fully conscious of German dependence on the US for its security. As long as he continues to dominate the Government, radically new initiatives on reunification are not likely to be forthcoming. It can also reasonably be expected that since the public has given him such a clear mandate, Chancellor Adenauer will continue on his past course of intimate association with the West, including strong support for NATO and European integration. There is no reason to anticipate that he would depart from his past reunification policy, where he maintained stoutly that an all-German Government must have complete freedom of decision, including the free choice of military alliance partners. Our own experience in dealing with the German Government has made it clear that the Chancellor is willing to hold to this position. This was manifest, for example, in the Working Group on German reunification and European security. Apart from a few officials in the Foreign Office, the Government did not make any serious high-level effort to demand a new or different approach, even though this might have appeared expedient in an election year.

The Chancellor's disinclination to embark on new paths in an attempt to secure German unity parallels a similar disinclination by the four occupation powers to depart from their established positions. The Soviet Union has been brutally frank in indicating it has no intention of relinquishing its control over the Soviet Zone of Germany with all the repercussions this would have on the rest of the satellite system, particularly Poland. On the contrary, the Russians have clearly directed their movements toward preservation of the status quo and further strengthening of their control over the GDR. Repeated Soviet insistence that reunification can be achieved only through negotiations between Bonn and Pankow, when the Russians know that this is one demand which the German Government and opposition unanimously reject, and the visit by Khrushchev and Mikoyan to East Germany, can only be interpreted as an indication of Soviet desire to strengthen their puppet regime in the GDR.

The French also seem more concerned with preventing rather than initiating new moves which might upset the present balance in Western Europe. Of course, they are so occupied with the Algerian problem, with inflation, and continued instability of their Governments that they have little energy, much less inclination, to develop initiatives on behalf of the Germans. The British attitude does not seem quite so clear cut.

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There is apparently some feeling on the official level that the West should do some fresh thinking, and the Labor Party has been putting pressure on the Government along the lines of the Gaitskell Plan. But these forces appear insufficient to bring the British Government to develop any new approach.

This situation, in which none of the interested European powers appear inclined to make any serious effort to reopen the reunification front, raises the question of whether there are any cogent reasons why the United States should take a fresh look at its position. We believe this may be worth doing for several reasons.

The foregoing outline of the prevailing currents affecting the question of reunification leads to the conclusion that little may happen in this area in the foreseeable future. However, there are other factors, mainly speculative, which introduce an element of doubt into this conclusion. To say that most Germans find the present division of Germany "acceptable" is only a partial description. For it is also true that the Germans are realistic. They have not been able to exercise any decisive influence towards reunification up to the present. They have been absorbed in reconstruction, in their own internal problems, and in regaining a position within the Western community of nations. So far as reunification is concerned, they have adjusted to what the majority of them feel is a situation which they, even if they wished, could not change.

But this acceptance of a truncated Germany may not continue indefinitely, especially in view of Germany's increasingly strong economic position, rearmament, the self-confidence which will be generated by the election, their continuously stronger demand that their voice be heard and influence felt in Western councils, and the present evolution of probably a more active Eastern policy.

As indicated earlier, as long as Chancellor Adenauer remains in full control, any major initiative on the German part is unlikely. But there are a number of prominent Germans who have long felt that the Chancellor is too inflexible in his reunification policy and who also believe as a matter of conscience that much more should be done in the Federal Republic to keep national sentiment alive and to whip up German interest in the plight of their brothers in the East.

People

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People like Kiesinger, Gerstenmaier, and Kaiser are only a few belonging to these schools of thought, and if the Chancellor should die or become less vigorous, such forces would naturally have an opportunity of making themselves felt. Of course, much would depend on the Chancellor's successor, but whoever he may be, he will certainly not enter office commanding the same prestige as Dr. Adenauer, with the same ability to make unpopular decisions if necessary. The question of what would happen with the reunification problem under such circumstances is admittedly speculative, but it might well be that a new Chancellor would feel compelled to demonstrate greater activity in this area to consolidate his position.

Despite its great restraint, the German Government has not in fact been entirely passive on the subject of reunification. They took a very stiff position on the subject of the relationship between reunification and disarmament, both in the Washington discussions last May (the May 28th communique) and in the negotiations about a European inspection zone. This was not mere electioneering but rather expressed their genuine desire that the West save its bargaining power for this problem. It can be taken for granted that the Germans will seek to involve the reunification question in some way in any major East-West negotiation.

An additional fact which must be noted is that even the present situation in Germany is not as completely stable as it appears on the surface and can be quickly disturbed by outside events over which Germans have no control. This was most apparent during the Hungarian crisis, which evoked a quick and intense reaction to the Soviet intervention, with substantial concern that the rebellion might spread to the East Zone, and provoke an uncontrollable reaction from the Federal Republic. To be sure, the threat of widespread hostilities as a result of unrest in Eastern Germany is minimized as long as the Soviets blanket the GDR with their twenty-two divisions, but the risk of Western involvement in the event of major uprisings cannot be completely ruled out. Furthermore, there is no sure guarantee that at some future date an aggressive German leader, backed by a strong German army, may not be willing to gamble that the Soviets would not unleash a third world war if he attempted to take back the Soviet Zone by force or the threat of force.

Apart from

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✓ Apart from the above considerations, developments here on the military front may now proceed so rapidly as to diminish the US room for manoeuvre with respect to a German settlement. The Germans are requesting for the first time an exception to the WEU list of weapons they are prohibited from manufacturing (the anti-tank missile). This exception will probably be granted, and may pave the way for others in the future. The Germans have established a Territorial Defense Organization not under NATO Command. Presumably, we will wish to discuss this development with the British and French, and perhaps subsequently with the Germans. As a guess, however, it will be difficult to stop the Germans from going ahead with this plan even though it was an essential part of the WEU control scheme to integrate all German forces with other NATO forces. Finally, the Germans want weapons as modern as their friends or enemies, including atomic weapons, and with the elections over this desire may soon become a demand. ✓ Further, and for the long term, the Germans may want to produce, or help the French produce, atomic weapons.

From the strictly military strength point of view, these changes may be to our advantage. However, they are going to reduce the US, in contrast to the German, bargaining power with respect to a German settlement. Our proposals regarding a German settlement have envisaged provisions limiting German military strength. That was feasible so long as we were denying something to the Germans which they didn't possess. It will be more difficult if and when they have achieved relative independence and equality in the military field.

So long as there is some prospect that the disarmament talks may succeed, it would probably be a mistake to open up another negotiating front - on Germany, especially since a principal Soviet concern seems to be the growing military strength of Western Germany and the desire to solve the "fourth country" problem. We presumably wish to buy what we can in the disarmament field from this Soviet fear. However, if the disarmament talks fade out in the next few months, then we may wish to consider seriously a move on the German problem.

Aside from the need to make periodic demonstrations to the Germans, particularly those in the Soviet Zone, of our interest in reunification, is the advantage gained by keeping the Soviet Union

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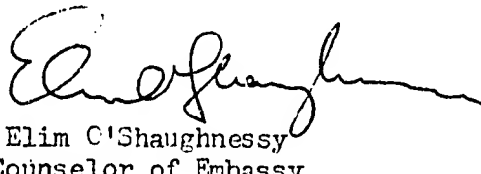
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on the defensive in this field, where their culpability is generally recognized. Therefore, we would hope that a new look would be taken at this problem on the assumption that no disarmament agreement will be reached in the next few years, including consideration of the implications the advent of widescale use of atomic weapons and the anticipated development of long-range missiles may have for a country in Germany's position. Expecting then a period in the future when the Germans may become more active in seeking reunification, it may prove desirable for us to take the initiative ourselves even though we are not under great pressure to do so, thereby gaining the credit for doing so and putting ourselves in a position of setting the time for negotiations in a period when we will have the maximum leverage vis-a-vis both the Germans and Russians and can exploit whatever limited chances of success there may be on terms of our choosing.

For the Ambassador:

  
Elim C'Shaughnessy  
Counselor of Embassy

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